(b) whether it is also a fact that an exportcess of Rs. 300 levied on per tonne of iron ore is virtually nothing compared to the rise in spot market iron ore prices; and

(c) if so, the steps Government proposes to take to protect and conserve iron ore reserves in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMIREDDY): (a) Under the National Mineral Policy in 1993, mining for non-fuel and non-atomic minerals has been thrown open for private sector investment and an Indian National or a Company as defined in sub-section 3(1) of the Companies Act, 1956 can undertake mining based on the economic viability of the project. Mining is a stand-alone activity. The Central Government, based on the State Governmnet recommendations, accords prior approval for grant of mineral concessions in terms of the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and Rules framed there under. The export of minerals including iron ore is as per the EXIM policy of the Government.

(b) The levy of export cess is a fiscal measure by Government and not linked to the movement of spot prices of iron ore.

(c) The Government is of the view that management of mineral resources is closely integrated with the overall strategy of development of minerals whereby exploitation of minerals is to be guided by long-term national goals and perspectives. The country has sufficient resources of iron ore at 25.25 billion tonnes and these are increasing with further exploration.

Mines of BALCO in Chhattisgarh

tI005. SHRISATYAVRATCHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILALVORA:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Bharat Aluminium Company Ltd. (BALCO) had applied to increase the production by four times in its bauxite mines at Sarguja in Chhattisgarh;

(b) whether it is a fact that importance has not been given to environment and wild life neither in BALCO nor in Sarguja itself by the Company;

(c) the total number of employers working in the Company and out of them the number of local people having participation in it; and

(d) the steps Government is taking to provide employment to local people in the Company and to play active role for environment and wild life?

THE MINISTEROF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY): (a) Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO) has informed that it has applied for increase in production in its Bauxite Mines at Sarguja in Chhattisgarh from 4.5 lakh metric tones per annum (MTPA) to 7.5 lakh MTPA.

(b) BALCO has informed that it is giving utmost importance to environment. Moreover, mining and other operations are being done in terms of the mining plan, as approved by the Indian Brueau of Mines in compliance with Environmental Laws.

tOriginal notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) As intimated by BALCO, the Company has 5266 regular employees as on 1.2.2008, out of which, 3582 are from the State of Chhattisgarh.

(d) After disinvestment and transfer of management control of BALCO in favour of a Strategic Partner (SP) on 2nd March, 2001, the appointment of requisite personnel in the Company comes within the purview of the SP. BALCO has informed that since disinvestment, BALCO has been giving preference to employment of candidates domiciled in the State on Chhattisgarh and to the wards of its employees. Besides, the Company also ensures that the contractors engaged by BALCO employ workers domiciled in the State of Chhattisgarh. BALCO has also intimated that it is ensuring that all terms and conditions contained in the environmental approvals are complied with.

Establishment of Equal Opportunity Commission

1006. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is going establish an Equal Opportunity Commission;

(b) if so, what would be the mandate of this Commission and what kind of activities would be performed by this Commision, and by when it is likely to be constituted;

(c) whether Government has decided about any deprivation index, to find out the kind of people who are deprived lot in the country;

(d) whether any expert committee has submitted any report in this regard;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(0 whether Sachar Committee's recommendations were also taken into consideration and if so, the details in that regard?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI A. R. ANTULAY): (a) to (f) The Sachar Committee had recommended that an Equal Opportunity Commission should be constituted to look into the grievances of deprived groups. An Expert Group was set up in August, 2007 to examine the structure and functions of such a commission. It is scheduled to submit its report shortly.

Education and loan facilities to minorities and backward communities

1007. SHRI KAMALAKHTAR: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has evolved a strategy to ensure better education and loan facilities to minority and backwards communities in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the basis on which Government has distinguished between minority and backward community status; and

(d) the achievements made, so far by Government in this regards?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI A. R. ANTULAY): (a), (b)and (d)A **statement,** regarding the decision taken on the recommendations of the Sachar Committee, **has been** laid on the Table of the House on 31.8.2007 which contains details of the